

1. Introduction to Modern World History

- **Quote (David McCullough):** History tells us who we are and why we are the way we are.
- To study human history better, scholars divide it into **three conventional periods**:

Period	Time Span	Key Features
Ancient	~5000–3000 BC to ~650 AD	Bronze & Iron Age settlements; rise of Greek kingdoms; new trade routes; rise & decline of Indus Valley Civilization; birth of major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Judaism); ended with decline of Roman Empire (Europe), Han Empire (China), Gupta Empire (India)
Medieval	5th century – 14th/15th century (~1000 years)	Acted as a bridge between Ancient and Modern world
Modern	~15th century onward	Began with European exploration, Renaissance ideas, and colonial expansion

Medieval Period — Two Phases

1. **Dark Ages** (5th/6th century – 13th/14th century)
 - o Followed the fall of the **Western Roman Empire**
 - o Marked by religious orthodoxy, superstition, feudalism, and political instability
 - o Science, culture, and individual freedom declined sharply
2. **Revival** (12th–14th century onward)
 - o Trade with the Arab world increased → economic prosperity + broader worldview
 - o This weakened feudalism and gave rise to **Humanism** (focus on human development & well-being)
 - o This intellectual awakening = **Renaissance**

Key Transitional Events (14th–16th century)

- **Hundred Years' War:** England vs France (1337–1453)
- **Black Death** (1346–1353): Plague that killed roughly half of Europe's population
- **Fall of Constantinople (1453):** Captured by the Ottoman Turks → triggered Europe's search for new sea trade routes
- **1492:** Columbus sets out for India, accidentally reaches **America**

- **1498**: Vasco da Gama reaches **India** via Africa
- These voyages triggered the era of **European conquest, imperialism, and colonialism** — marking the start of the Modern World

Note: Historians disagree on the *exact* start of the Modern Era — some say it's the Fall of Constantinople (1453), others say it's the end of the Dark Ages/start of Renaissance, and others credit the discovery of America or the Industrial Revolution.

2. The Renaissance ("Rebirth")

Timeline: Roughly 14th to 17th century

Background

- After the fall of the Western Roman Empire (5th century CE), Greek and Roman scholars became part of the **Byzantine Empire** (Eastern Roman Empire), which preserved classical knowledge.
- Meanwhile, Western Europe, lacking scientific progress, sank into the **Dark Ages**.

Triggers

1. The Crusades (1095-1295)

- Religious wars between Christians and Islamic Turks over Jerusalem
- First major large-scale contact between isolated European society and another advanced civilization
- Led to exchange of religious, scientific, and philosophical knowledge (e.g., advanced mathematics from the Middle East)
- Considered one medium that triggered the Renaissance

2. Fall of Constantinople (1453)

- Byzantine Greek scholars and artists were forced to migrate — many went to **Rome/Italy**
- Italian city-states like **Venice** and **Florence** were already among the richest trade hubs in the world, and were not involved in European wars or under heavy Church control
- Rich Italian merchants became **patrons** of these displaced Greek/Roman scholars, funding art, architecture, and literature

Core Idea: Humanism

- Prioritized **life on Earth** (karma/deeds) over blind religious devotion
- Placed **humans at the center** of the universe (instead of God/Church)
- Promoted education, classical arts, literature, and science
- Replaced superstition and theology with **rational thinking**

Impact Areas

- **Art:** Painters like **Da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Raphael** depicted human subjects (even Jesus and Mary) in human form, moving away from purely religious themes
- **Literature:** Shift from elite Latin to local/vernacular languages
 - Dante — *The Divine Comedy* (13th century, Italian)
 - Machiavelli — *The Prince*
 - Petrarch — love sonnets
- **Printing Press:** Invented by **Johannes Gutenberg** (mid-15th century) → made spreading education and new ideas to the common people much easier
- **Science:**
 - **Roger Bacon** (13th century) laid the foundation of modern/experimental science
 - Followed by **Galileo, Copernicus, and Johannes Kepler**, whose discoveries challenged centuries-old Church beliefs

Significance

- The wave of Humanism spread from Italy across Europe, fueling competition in art, literature, and science between nations
- This directly fed into the later **Enlightenment** and **Industrial Revolution**

3. The Reformation

A **religious reform movement** running parallel to the Renaissance — shifted European society's focus from orthodox religion to a more human-centric outlook.

Background / Causes

- Growing public resentment: the Church preached enduring worldly suffering and devotion to God, while it itself pursued political power and wealth through taxation
- **Black Death (1346-1353):** killed roughly half of Europe's population → people began losing faith in the Church and orthodox religion
- Early reformers:
 - **John Wycliffe** (England) and **Jan Hus** (Bohemia) — late 1300s/early 1400s — argued the Church had become merely a means of extracting money from people
 - They strongly opposed the sale of "**Letters of Indulgence**" — documents sold by the Church claiming to free buyers from the burden of sin (a practice with no basis in the Bible)

- o Supported later (1500) by Christian humanists like **Erasmus** and **Thomas More**
- **Printing Press** enabled mass translation of the Bible into local languages
→ people no longer depended on priests to access religious teachings

Martin Luther (1517)

- A German monk who launched a campaign against the **Catholic Church and Pope's monopoly**
- Key beliefs:
 - o All people are equal in their faith in God
 - o No need for a priest to interpret the Bible or connect with God
 - o Salvation comes only through faith in God and his forgiveness — not through Church rituals
- His ideas spread to Switzerland via **Ulrich Zwingli** and **John Calvin**
- Germany and Switzerland's churches eventually broke away from the Pope and Catholic Church

Spread & Resistance

- Initially opposed by rulers like **Holy Roman Emperor Charles V** and **Pope Leo X**
- Despite resistance, the movement spread rapidly through:
 - o The printing press
 - o Word-of-mouth publicity
 - o Support from the merchant class and farmers
 - o Backing from some local rulers
- Eventually, the Catholic Church allowed Protestants the freedom to worship their own way; local languages were used in sermons instead of Latin

Key Political Event

- **1529, England:** King **Henry VIII** called the "Reformation Parliament" and broke ties with the Pope
 - o The King/Queen of England was declared the **Head of the Church**

Catholic Church's Response

- The Catholic Church itself underwent internal reform (a counter-movement), emphasizing simplicity and service to the people — especially seen in **Spain and Italy**

Significance

- The Reformation helped **separate state politics and economy from religion**
- This led to the rise of **secular nation-states** and growing **nationalism** in Europe

4. Conclusion

- **Renaissance** → gave rise to human-centric ideas (Humanism)
- **Reformation** → gave rise to the concept of the secular state
- Together, these two movements laid the foundation for the **French Revolution, American Revolution**, and the **Industrial Revolution** — marking humanity's full transition from the **Medieval** to the **Modern** world